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ABSTRACT

Diverse philosophies are in evidence in teaching writing. Approaches used in teaching writing should assist students to achieve optimally as well as provide for individual differences, help them attain meaning and understanding of subject matter written, develop students' interest in communicating written content, establish purpose and reasons for writing, and develop appreciation of the use of graphemes to convey information to others. Writing to solve problems emphasizes having students write as the need arises within a problem solving framework. Writing to achieve specific objectives stresses students achieving predetermined precise objectives in a logical writing curriculum. Student decision making and writing has students determine sequential tasks to complete in writing, with students involved in planning goals, activities, and appraisal procedures in writing. In writing instruction, problem solving procedures should be in evidence. The real world emphasizes solving personal and social problems as a necessity in life. Writing to attain specific objectives may have little to do with expressing thoughts and ideas to others. Writing needs to emphasize holism in that creativity and originality must enter into the final product. An integrated writing curriculum needs to be in evidence. (SR)

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PHILOSOPHY OF WRITING INSTRUCTION

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Diverse philosophies are in evidence in teaching writing. Each school of thought needs adequate emphasis in teaching-learning situations. Which philosophy should then be utilized? Approaches used in teaching writing should assist students to

1. achieve optimally as well as provide for individual differences.
2. attain meaning and understanding of subject matter written.
3. develop interest in communicating written content.
4. establish purpose and reasons for writing.
5. appreciate use of graphemes to convey information to others.

These five guidelines provide a framework for adopting selected philosophies in writing across the school curriculum.

Writing to Solve Problems

Problem solving philosophies emphasize relating the writing curriculum with the real world of society. In society, problems arise, are identified, and solutions sought. Writing across the curriculum may well emphasize that which is utilitarian in society. Thus, students individually or within committees select a problem to solve within a contextual situation. The problem should be adequately delimited and possess clarity in writing. Subject matter then needs to be acquired, directly related to solving the problem. A variety of reference sources

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need to be utilized including reading as well as audio-visual materials. Notes, outlines, and summaries need to be written pertaining to subject matter acquired. As a result of data gathered, a hypothesis (or hypotheses) needs to be developed in written form. The hypothesis is tentative, not an absolute. Additional reference sources need to be consulted by students with teacher guidance. The hypothesis may then be substantiated, refuted or modified.

Throughout the time that problem solving is emphasized, the writing teacher is a guide, a stimulator, and a resource person.

Problem solving philosophies in the teaching of writing stress

1. a holistic approach. Thus from an ongoing unit of study, a problem is identified by learners. Data is gathered, a hypothesis is developed and tested within a context. Problems selected should be salient in the societal arena. The writing curriculum and society then become one, not isolated from each other.

2. a psychological curriculum in that sequence resides within the student, not within basal textbooks, workbooks, or in the mind of the teacher. Students with teacher assistance sequence their own experiences in a problem solving strategy of writing activities.

3. students acquiring vital subject matter as a means to an end and that end being to solve problems. Subject matter then is not attained for its own sake.

4. higher levels of cognition in that subject matter acquired relates directly to the identified problem. Critical thinking is inherent when the relevant is separated from the irrelevant in problem solving situations.

5. creative thinking in that novel methods are utilized in each of the flexible steps of problem solving. An open ended writing curriculum is inherent in problem solving philosophies of teaching.

The writer strongly recommends writing across the curriculum when problems are identified for solution. Society prizes highly when individuals are able to solve personal and social problems.

Writing to Achieve Specific Objectives

Precise, measurably stated objectives in writing may be written by the classroom teacher, at the district level with instructional management systems, or at the state level with mandated objectives. The objectives for writing need to possess little/no leaway in terms of interpretation. Either a student has/has not achieved these objectives as a result of instruction. Learning activities in writing must relate directly to the stated objectives. A variety of purposes in writing should be in evidence to match up with the precise ends. Thus writing business and friendly letter, outlines, plays, poems, and stories, may provide content as learning activities to achieve objectives.

Evaluation should be emphasized in terms of stated objectives. Thus evaluation procedure are aligned with the specific objectives, whereas the learning activities in writing are in alignment with the objectives. Validity is then stressed in the evaluation process.

A logical writing curriculum is then in evidence. The specific objectives have been determined for students to attain prior to each writing activity. Generally, students achieve sequential objectives in ascending order of complexity. Writing teachers are in the best position to perceive order or sequence in goals that learners are to achieve,according to advocates of measurably stated objectives.

Specific objectives philosophy in teaching writing emphasize

1. students achieving highly structured ends, predetermined prior to instruction.

2. students being tested very frequently to determine if each objective has been achieved.

3. teachers being held accountable for student attainment of each specific objective.

4. use of highly precise objectives which stress an either/or philosophy of teaching. Thus a student has/has not achieved an objective as a result of instruction.

5. the curriculum area of writing being broken down into component parts so that highly precise objectives can be identified.

The writer, as a whole, does not recommend a specific objectives philosophy of teaching writing. Writing becomes a fragmented entity. If, for example, a specific objective for students to achieve states the following. "Given ten sentences, the student will write the correct end punctuation mark for each sentence," the learner may show mastery in successful attainment of the objective. And yet, achieving this fragmented objective may have little or nothing to do with expressing thoughts and ideas to others. Writing needs to emphasize holism in that creativity and originality must enter into the written product. Written products consist of subject matter/content to convey to others. The mechanics of writing, such as end punctuation marks, are secondary in importance. The mechanics of writing are important when stressing clarity in written communication. Specific objectives might be emphasized if the ends achieved by students are related to larger units such as fluency of ideas, creativity, and originality of written expression.

Student Decision-making and Writing

Student-teacher planning of goals, activities, as well as appraisal procedures in writing emphasizes a decision-making model. Thus students with teacher guidance may plan learning centers to be utilized in writing. Each center needs to have a title such as a business and friendly letter writing center. A task card should be located at each center. The task card lists learning opportunities. Students may then select the center and tasks to complete sequentially. Sequence resides

within the learner here in a psychological writing curriculum. The student makes sequential choices in terms of learning opportunities to complete. The writing teacher is a resource person, a guide, and a stimulator. Tasks not possessing perceived purpose by students may be omitted. There are more tasks on the task cards than any one learner can complete. The student may select tasks involving problem solving, as well as those stressing attaining specific objectives.

A humane writing curriculum is in evidence if the learner may truly select tasks from among alternatives, according to advocates of pupil decision-making strategies of teaching.

A contract system may also be emphasized as a decision-making model of writing. Here, the student plans with the teacher a list of writing activities to complete with a due date emphasized. The student and the writing teacher sign the agreement. Heavy student involvement is inherent in a contract system of writing activities to complete. A committee of students collectively might agree upon a contract with teacher assistance. The committee, instead of individual pupils, cooperatively plans tasks to complete sequentially within the contract.

Decision-making strategies involve

1. students being the focal point in determining writing activities in sequence.

2. students being choosers and selectors in terms of tasks to engage in.

3. students being encouraged by teachers to achieve, develop, and accomplish in writing endeavors through personal choices made.

4. students being involved in learning rather than teachers teaching writing to students.

5. students being perceivers of order in sequential writing activities pursued.

In Closing

Selected philosophies in teaching writing were discussed.

1. Problem solving procedures emphasizes students writing as the need arises within a problem solving framework.

2. Writing to achieve precise ends stresses students achieving predetermined precise objectives in a logical writing curriculum.

3. Students determining sequential tasks to complete in writing. Activities not perceived as being purposeful may be omitted.

The writer recommends problem solving procedures be in evidence. The real world in society emphasizes solving personal and social problems as a necessity in life. Decision making strategies are also recommended in that problem solving might be stressed here as well as students selecting diverse creative activities, such as poetry writing which might well be outside the problem solving domain. Writing to

attain specific objectives might emphasize tasks which are too constraining. The latter approach might well minimize holism, creativity, and uniqueness of ideas in writing. Instead, an integrated writing curriculum needs to be in evidence.